

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07

IO-10 JUSE-00 NSAE-00 SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05

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R 162116Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2428

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EO: 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS SNAR CO US

SUBJ: COMPLAINTS FROM AMCITS ON DRUG SEARCHES AT COLOMBIAN  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

1. OVER THE PAST FOUR TO FIVE MONTHS, THIS EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED A RASH OF COMPLAINTS FROM AMERICAN TOURISTS REGARDING BODY SEARCHES FOR DRUGS AT BOGOTA AND OTHER COLOMBIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS. THESE COMPLAINTS HAVE RESULTED IN SEVERAL CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRIES, THE LATEST FROM SENATOR HIRAM FONG OF HAWAII.

2. COMPLAINTS HAVE CENTERED AROUND TWO MAIN POINTS: THAT GOC NARCOTICS AGENTS HAVE FAILED TO ADEQUATELY IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AND THAT THESE AGENTS HAVE FAILED TO EXPLAIN THE REASON FOR THE BODY SEARCH. SOME WOMEN HAVE ALSO COMPLAINED OF LACK OF PRIVACY IN THE AREAS WHERE BODY SEARCHES ARE CONDUCTED AT BOGOTA'S ELDO-RADO AIRPORT. BODY SEARCHES OF WOMEN SUSPECTS ARE, HOWEVER, CONDUCTED BY WOMEN JUDICIAL POLICE OFFICERS. THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MONOLINGUAL AMERICAN TOURISTS AND EQUALLY MONOLINGUAL JUDICIAL POLICE NARCOTICS AGENTS, WHO ARE NOW ASSIGNED TO ALL COLOMBIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS.

3. THE MISSION NARCOTICS COORDINATOR LAST MONTH DISCUSSED THESE COMPLAINTS AND PROBLEMS WITH THE VICE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, THE  
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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL NARCOTICS COUNCIL AND THE

GOC ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE. NARCOR MADE CLEAR THAT EMBASSY (AND INDEED MANY TOURISTS THEMSELVES) DID NOT QUESTION NEED FOR SUCH SEARCHES BUT THAT IT WOULD BE OF MUTUAL BENEFIT IF GOC TOOK ACTION TO BETTER IDENTIFY ITS JUDICIAL POLICE NARCOTICS OFFICERS AND IMPROVE ITS EXAMINATION FACILITIES AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS. THE MATTER WAS DISCUSSED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DANGEROUS DRUGS -- A POLICY-MAKING BODY WHICH INCLUDES ALL DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES-- AND WE WERE PROMISED REMEDIAL ACTION. IN ADDITION, THE ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR JUDICIAL POLICE -- WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR AIRPORT NARCOTICS UNITS -- AGREED TO POST SIGNS IN ENGLISH, SPANISH, AND FRENCH IDENTIFYING AIRPORT JUDICIAL POLICE OFFICES, ADVISING TRAVELERS THAT COLOMBIA IS COOPERATING IN THE INTERNATIONAL WAR AGAINST DRUGS AND STATING THAT TOURISTS WERE LIABLE TO BODY SEARCHES FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS. USIS BOGOTA HAS AGREED TO PRINT THESE POSTERS FOR PLACEMENT (WITHOUT USG ATTRIBUTION) IN EACH COLOMBIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT EARLY IN 1976. MOREOVER, THE ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL AGREED TO PROVIDE BETTER PRIVATE FACILITIES FOR SEARCHING WOMEN SUSPECTS. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THESE MEASURES WILL ALLEVIATE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY GROWING NUMBERS OF US TOURISTS TRAVELING TO AND THROUGH COLOMBIA. VAKY

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